Political Antisemitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression*

by Hyman Berman

Political antisemitism was used successfully in the United States in Minnesota to defeat the Farmer-Labor governor in the 1938 election. Although commentators ranging from Charles I. Cooper in 1943, Cary McWilliams in 1946 and W. Gunther Plaut in 1959 describe Minneapolis as the center of antisemitic activity in the United States, they invaribly discuss social discrimination and economic exclusion as the major ingredient of the disease.[1] Not to minimize these facets of antisemitism, the massive trauma inflicted upon the Minnesota Jewish community, however, stemmed from the open and flagrant use of antisemitism in the political campaign of 1938. It is this campaign, its background and aftermath, that constitute a major event in the history of Minnesota and its Jewish community.

Minnesota, like the rest of the nation, experienced major economic and social dislocations as a consequence of the Great Depression. Accompanying massive unemployment in the urban areas was sharpened distress in the rural areas. Although predictions of social revolution proved groundless, political upheaval occurred. The election of Floyd B. Olson, the Farmer-Labor candidate for Governor in 1930, signalled the beginnings of a political and social change which was unanticipated by the wielders of power in the State. Since the Civil War, Republican domination of State politics had been the rule despite recurring protest movements: Grangers, Populists, Non-Partisan Leaguers, and Farmer-Laborites. The Democratic Party remained an insignificant patronage organization mainly centered in Catholic St. Paul active only when Democratic presidents had jobs to distribute in the State.[2]

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[1] Charles I. Cooper, "The Jews of Minneapolis and their Christian Neighbors," *Jewish Social Studies,* 8 (1946), 31-38; Carey McWilliams, "Minneapolis: The Curious Twin," *Common Ground,* 7 (1946), 61-65; W. Gunther Plaut, *The Jews in Minnesota* (New York, 1959), pp. 273-290. For other discussions of social discrimination and economic exclusion of Jews in Minnesota see Selden C. Menefee, "What Americans Think," *The Nation,* 156 (5 May 1943), 764-768; Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Transition* (Minneapolis, 1949), pp. 43-68.

[2] For the impact of the depression on Minnesota see Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State,* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, 1975), pp. 480-81, 521-579; Raymond L. Koch, "Politics and Relief in Minneapolis During the 1930's," *Minnesota History,* 41 (1968), 153-159. For Minnesota politics see G. Theodore Mitau, *Politics in Minnesota* (Minneapolis, 1970) and Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota, 1899-1918* (St. Paul, 1971).

Olson's election in 1930 and subsequent reelections in 1932 and 1934 changed this. For twenty-five years, the Twin Cities were dominated by a group of Republican bankers and business men organized in the Citizens Alliance, dedicated to preserving an "open shop" environment in the State. Through social and business contacts this political control ranged throughout the State from the Iron Ranges in the North to the grain producing areas of the South and West.[3] This control was upset, not only by the elections of 1930, 1932, and 1934, but also by what the Farmer-Labor victories promised. The open-shop was destroyed in a series of massive and bloody strikes in 1934 and 1935 during which the Farmer-Labor administration used the State power to aid and assist the strikers.[4] National pressure was applied through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation on the Twin Cities banks by the Roosevelt administration to compel recalcitrant, old-line open-shoppers to bargain in good faith with their workers.[5] To those accustomed to unrestricted use of power and access to the State instruments of power this overturn in fortunes constituted a major revolution. When previously challenged in 1916-1918 by militant union organizing, farmer discontent, Wobbly, Non-Partisan League activities and antiwar activism, the Republican old guard and the Citizens Alliance successfully utilized patriotic antiradical scares to resist this challenge. Similar attacks upon Governor Olson failed, but the tactic was not discarded.[6]

Governor Olson was born and raised in North Minneapolis. His Norwegian father and Swedish mother were constantly fighting and young Floyd sought the companionship and warmth of his best friend's family, the Harrises. North Minneapolis in the early twentieth century was the center of the Yiddish speaking community and young Floyd acted as the *Shabbos Goy* for

[3] "History and Objectives of the Citizens Alliance," undated mimeographed Fact Sheet in Citizens Alliance Papers, Box 1. (All manuscript collections cited are in the Minnesota Historical Society except where noted.) The Citizens Alliance papers, consisting of 27 boxes and 4 volumes of letters, bulletins, clippings, pamphlets, reports and scrapbooks, reveal the farflung influence and power of this group within the State of Minnesota from the time of its founding in 1903 until its power was broken during the mid 1930s.

[4] For the strikes which broke the Citizens Alliance control over Minnesota politics, see Charles R. Walker, *An American City: A Rank and File History* (New York, 1937), *passim*; Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion* (New York, 1972), *passim*; Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Power* (New York, 1973), *passim*; Philip Korth, "Teamster Strike of 1934," unpublished seminar paper, University of Minnesota, 1965, George D. Tselos, "The Minneapolis Labor Movement in the 1930's," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1970 (unpublished), pp. 215-267.

[5] "Minneapolis Trucking Strike, Chronology of Events Submitted to Lloyd Garrison, Chariman, National Labor Relations Board by Federal Mediators, Francis J. Haas, E. H. Dunnigan and P. S. Donoghue, August 28, 1934;" Francis J. Haas and E. H. Dunnigan to C. T. Jaffray, 9 August 1934 in Minneapolis Administrative Files, National Labor Board Papers, Record Group 25, Box 385, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Thomas E. Blantz, "Father Haas and the Minneapolis Truckers' Strike of 1934," *Minnesota History*, 42 (1970), 5-15.

[6] Robert L. Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Non-Partisan League, 1915-1922* (Minneapolis, 1955), pp. 152-173, 183-201; Bruce L. Larson, *Lindbergh of Minnesota: A Political Biography* (New York, 1973), pp. 215-261. The use of patriotism and antiradicalism to combat dissent in Minnesota during and immediately after World War I is meticulously documented in the papers of Joseph A. A. Burnquist and Jacob A. O. Preus, Republican governors during this period, and in the papers of the Minnesota Commission on Public Safety, the latter found in the Minnesota State Archives, St. Paul.

many of his Jewish neighbors. Throughout his political career Olson was better able to campaign in Yiddish than in either Swedish or Norwegian. It is not surprising then, that he should surround himself with his Jewish friends when he became Hennepin County Attorney late in 1920 and Governor a little over ten years later.[7] This coincided with the coming to maturity of the second generation of eastern European Jewish immigrants in Minnesota. A small but significant number of Jewish young people attended the University of Minnesota, completed law school or journalism and embarked on political careers as staff people in the governor's office. Additonally Olson attracted a small number of more mature Jewish trade unionists and semi-professionals who were placed in key patronage positions. Abe I. Harris became the editor of the *Minnesota Leader,* the mouthpiece for the Farmer-Labor Party and the official organ for the Governor. Maurice Rose was appointed chauffeur and shared the honor with George B. Leonard of being Olson's main drinking companion. Edward J. Pearlove was appointed State Comptroller, Jean Spielman, State Printer, Harry Fiterman, Tax Commissioner and Roger Rutchick, Assistant Attorney General. For the first time in Minnesota history were a significant number of Jews appointed to State offices and the consequent whispering campaign against Jewish dominance became a minor-key accompaniment to the antiradical rhetoric during Olson's reelection campaigns. Olson's personal popularity, his articulation of the interests and desires of poor farmers and workers during the depression, his friendship and political coalition with the New Deal, rendered him immune to the whispers and attacks.[8]

Olson's handling of depression problems, his political alliance with the New Deal, and his personal popularity made him a national figure and, to enhance his national standing, his advisors convinced him to run for the United States Senate in 1936. This threatened to split the Farmer-Labor Party wide open as several successors vied for the honor of succeeding to the Governor's chair. When Senator Thomas Schall was killed in an automobile accident in December 1935 the internal cleavages within the party became open as the succession struggle was prematurely begun.[9]

[7] For the early career of Floyd B. Olson see George H. Mayer, *The Political Career of Floyd B. Olson* (Minneapolis, 1951), pp. 7-16; John S. McGrath and James J. Delmont, *Floyd B. Olson, 1891-1936: A Memorial Volume* (St. Paul, 1937), pp. 23-51; John Janney, "Minnesota's Enigma," *American Magazine,* 120 (1935), 47, 106-109; Vincent (Vince) A. Day, Governor Olson's private secretary and later municipal and district judge in Minneapolis wrote, "Governor Olson was reared in Minneapolis, in a Jewish community, where he saw misery at its worst. He learned the language of the Jew and through it inbibed the spirit of resistance to poverty and injustice." Vince Day, "Election Speech for Gov. Olson, November 1932," in Vince A. Day Papers, Box 3, Folder 22.

[8] For Governor Olson's appointments, see *The Minnesota Legislative Manual, 1931-32, 33-34; 35-36* (St. Paul, 1933, 1935, 1937); Olson's political positions can be seen in the speeches reprinted in McGrath and Delmont, pp. 177-333. Olson's personal popularity and platform presence are the subject of Kenneth L. Berger, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Public Speaking of Floyd B. Olson," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1955.

[9] Mayer, pp. 280-288; *Minneapolis Tribune,* 23 December 1935, *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* 23 December 1935.

The Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota was formed in 1920 by a loose coalition of dissident farmers coming out of the populist and Non-Partisan League protest efforts, together with the organized labor groups of the Twin Cities pushed to the left by the post war Republican reaction and radical repression which partially aimed at eliminating even conservative trade unionism as a significant force in Minnesota society. Even though the Party achieved electoral successes during the decade of the New Era and particularly during the first half of the Depression Decade, replacing the Democratic Party as either the first or second party in the State, sharp cleavages existed within the Farmer-Labor ranks. These cleavages were not only rural-urban, farmer-worker, but primarily ideological and personal. The left wing of the Party, represented by the forces surrounding Floyd B. Olson and consisting of ideological socialists, industrial unionists and practical cooperators, looked to the creation of a "cooperative commonwealth" as an alternate to rampant free enterprise. The right wing of the Party was interested in minimal reforms of the social structure, particularly as these reforms would allow small farmers, small businessmen, small bankers and skilled craft unionists to survive and prosper in an increasingly monopolized capitalism. Complicating further these divisions was the fact that the Party attracted opportunistic office seekers, patronage-hungry job holders and, after the Summer of 1935, Communist Party activists responding to the changed Party line enunciated at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.[10]

The succession struggle reflected these party divisions, although not perfectly, since lines had not hardened by early 1936. The group around Olson looked to Bank Commissioner Elmer A. Benson as Olson's successor and, to gain the edge for him, convinced the Governor to appoint Benson to serve the unexpired term of the deceased Senator Schall, it being clearly understood that Benson would then run for Governor and Olson for the United States Senate the next year.[11] The opposition coalesced around the

[10] The only available full length study of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party is Arthur Naftalin, "A History of the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1948. This study, based entirely on newspaper sources, is now obsolete in light of the vast manuscript holdings of the Minnesota Historical Society. The cleavages within the Farmer-Labor Party are discussed by Naftalin, pp. 288-296; Mayer, pp. 165-183. A reading of the manuscript collections of the Farmer-Labor activists, Howard Y. Williams, Elmer A. Benson, Floyd B. Olson, Vince A. Day, Hjalmar Petersen, Henry G. Teigan, Knud Wefald gives a detailed account of the cleavages. The influx of job seekers into the Farmer-Labor Party can be seen through examination of the patronage files of the Olson and Benson administrations. These files are available because an agent for Ray P. Chase, the Republican activist, pilfered them from the State Capitol. See Karl A. Lundberg Folders, Box 16, Ray P. Chase Papers. On the Communist Party's change of line in Minnesota, see Benjamin Mandel to William Mahoney, 14 January 1935, Mahoney Papers; Nathan Fine to Howard Y. Williams, 4 March 1936; Howard Y. Williams to Nathan Fine, 11 March 1936, Box 29, Howard Y. Williams Papers; and "Draft Resolution of the Minnesota State Committee of the Communist Party,"August 1937, in Communist Party Folder, Box 7, Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council Papers.

[11] A story was spread that Governor Olson was tricked into appointing Elmer Benson to the U. S. Senate. It was first published by Charles B. Cheney, political reporter for the Republican-leaning *Minneapolis Journal*, 10 March 1936, repeated in Naftalin, pp. 300-302 and Mayer, *Political Career*, pp. 284-288. The manuscript sources do not confirm this conspiratorial story.

Lieutenant Governor Hjalmar Petersen who wished Olson to resign as Governor, enter the United States Senate and be succeeded by Petersen in the Governor's chair. Olson's appointment of Benson to the United States Senate soured Petersen, a highly ambitious and unprincipled politician who began a campaign of vilification against Olson, Benson and their supporters by attacking the people around Governor Olson as Tammany bosses and "Mexican Generals." The term "Mexican General" quickly became a code term used to attack the Jewish advisers and office holders surrounding the Governor.[12]

Elmer Benson and Hjalmar Petersen were both from similar backgrounds and, by 1936, both had come to the same ideological position. Benson, of Norwegian background, grew up in Appleton, Minnesota and, after receiving a law degree, returned to his home town to pursue a banking and business career in a small town serving the Western agricultural hinterland. The farm depression of the 1920s caused him to read and consider alternative economic systems and, by 1932, he had become a radical Farmer-Laborite close to Floyd Olson. His education was furthered by Roger Rutchick who joined him as the Attorney General's staff person when Benson, as Bank Commissioner, was faced with the legal ramifications resulting from the massive bank foreclosures of 1933. A close personal and professional friendship developed between the St. Paul Jewish attorney and the former Appleton banker, a friendship which was to grow into an even closer professional association when Benson became Governor and Rutchick was named the Governor's private secretary and chief political advisor. By 1936, when Benson was appointed United States Senator by Olson, Benson had accepted an advanced antifascist position, supported the left wing of the New Deal, sponsored the National Youth Act, and called for congressional investigations of the Black Legion and the Silver Shirts. In short, Benson had accepted most of the tenets of the popular or united front policy advocated by the American Communist Party after 1935. Benson's secretary Rutchick, frightened by the impact of naziism on the Jews, as well as hating what he considered to be the reactionary racist policies of naziism, reinforced Benson's views, lending a factual base to the later charges and innuendoes about Jewish influence on Benson.[13]

Hjalmar Petersen, a Danish immigrant as a young child, settled with his

[12] The development of Hjalmar Petersen's opposition to Olson-Benson can be traced through the following correspondence: Hjalmar Petersen to E. T. Ebbesen, 14 November 1935; H. P. to Howard M. Frederickson, 26 November 1935; H. P. to Charles B. Cheney, 24 December 1935, 26 December 1935, and 27 December 1935. (In these last letters Petersen described to Cheney, the conservative *Journal* reporter, the role of the "brain trusters," A. I. Harris and others, in appointing Elmer Benson to the U. S. Senate.) In a last minute attempt to block Benson's appointment, Petersen endorsed Howard Y. Williams, a leading Minnesota advocate of a national third party, for the U. S. Senate. See Howard Y. Williams to H. P., 24 December 1935; H. P. to Howard Y. Williams, 26 December 1935. All letters in Box 7, Hjalmar Petersen Papers.

[13] A eulogistic biography of Elmer A. Benson is James M. Shields, *Mr. Progressive; A Biography of Elmer A. Benson* (Minneapolis, 1971). For Benson's career through his year as U. S. Senator, see Shields, pp. 13-72. Benson's Senate activities are described by George Creel, "Finishing School," *Col-*

parents in Askov, "the Rutabagas Capital of the World," in northern Minnesota, where after an uneventful childhood, he became the founder and editor of the *Askov American*, "the leading rural weekly in northern Minnesota." Experiences similar to Benson's during the First World War and the farm recession of the 1920s drove Petersen to the left and, by the time of Olson's first election as Governor, Petersen was a respected Farmer-Labor leader in the lower house of the Minnesota legislature. Petersen was responsible for pushing through the Minnesota Income Tax Law during the 1933 legislative session and was rewarded by being nominated to run as Lieutenant Governor with Olson in the 1934 election. As Lieutenant Governor, Petersen had little to do, so he worked with Howard Y. Williams, Executive Director of the League for Independent Political Action and the American Commonwealth Federation to foster a national third party to move the New Deal to the left. In light of subsequent developments it is ironic that the Minnesota Stalinists looked to Petersen as their candidate when the succession struggle first emerged. His ideology was skin deep, however, and his leftward stance was probably the result of Olson and Benson's deal with the New Deal Democrats whereby, in return for Farmer-Labor support for Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection effort in Minnesota, the Democrats would withdraw their candidates for United States Senate and Governor.[14]

Despite Petersen's campaign against the "Mexican Generals" who, he claimed, tightly controlled the Farmer-Labor Party, the nominating convention proceeded as expected in endorsing Floyd B. Olson for the United States Senate seat and Elmer A. Benson for governor. To maintain harmony, Petersen was offered and accepted the nomination for Railroad and Warehouse

lier's Weekly, 21 March 1936. The Minnesota press followed Benson's career closely, but none more closely than Abe I. Harris in the *Minnesota Leader* and in a syndicated column sent to rural Farmer-Labor weekly newspapers. The Benson papers are sparse for the early years but there are some letters of Benson to Roger Rutchick and Rutchick to Benson in the first few boxes covering the early years of Benson's service in St. Paul.

[14] Although the Hjalmar Petersen papers are complete, no full length biography of Governor Petersen has been published, nor have any articles regarding his political or personal life appeared. For his early years see Hjalmar Petersen Interview, 28 May 1963. A full file of the *Askov American* can be found at the Minnesota Historical Society. For the relationship between Petersen and Howard Y. Williams, see the correspondence between them in the Petersen Papers, Box 8 and the Howard Y. Williams papers, Boxes 29 and 30. For the relationship between Hjalmar Petersen and the Communist Party see the correspondence between H. P. and Lillian Schwartz, Petersen's secretary, from November 1935 to February 1936. Miss Schwartz was a leading member of the Minneapolis Young Communist League and subsequently married Carl Ross and John Gates, two leading Communists of the next two decades. See Lillian Schwartz to H. P., 8 November 1935; H. P. to L. S., 11 November 1935, L. S. to H. P., 13 November 1935; H. P. to L. S., 14 November 1935; H. P. to L. S. 27 December 1935, Petersen Papers Box 7. Even after leaving Petersen's employ their correspondence continued with Petersen seeking a job for Miss Schwartz. See Hjalmar Petersen to Paul E. Rasmussen 31 March 1936; L. S. to H. P., 8 April, 14 April, and 21 May 1936 and H. P. to L. S., 26 May 1936, Petersen Papers Box 8. The relationship with national Communists can be seen in Hjalmar Petersen to Alfred M. Bingham, 20 April 1936, Petersen Papers Box 8 and Howard Y. Williams to Thomas R. Amlie, 12 May 1936; Abe I. Harris to Bingham and Amlie, 20 May 1936, Williams Papers, Box 30, and H. Y. W. to Eugene Dennis, 23 April 1936; Eugene Dennis to H. Y. W., 24 April 1936, Williams Papers, Box 29.

Commissioner.[15] The surface party harmony was shattered in the summer of 1936, when it became known to most insiders that Olson was dying of cancer. Olson's friends, among whom were Abe Harris and George Leonard, were determined to keep this fact from the Governor himself but this scheme was defeated when, on 12 August, ten days before Olson's death, Petersen wrote the Governor demanding that for reasons of health he resign, convince Benson to run for election to the Senate, allow Petersen to succeed to the governorship and run for election to that office in the fall. This act of perfidy destroyed whatever cordial relations still existed between the Olson group and the Lieutenant Governor, and after Olson's death Benson reiterated his intention to run for governor and the State Committee selected Ernest Lundeen to replace Olson as the party's Senate candidate.[16]

The entire Farmer-Labor ticket was overwhelmingly elected in 1936. This was partially a result of the local expression of Roosevelt's landslide reelection victory and partially a result of state-wide mourning over the death of the "Skipper." Despite Republican efforts to depict Elmer Benson as a captive of Communism and a tool of unscrupulous labor racketeers, Benson won with the largest majority given a gubernatorial candidate in Minnesota up to that time. The Farmer-Labor Party also gained control of the lower house of the legislature, but not the State Senate.[17]

Before the oath of office had been administered to Elmer Benson, Hjalmar Petersen was out in search of a constituency. As the Benson administration moved further to the left, so Petersen moved further in the opposite direction. Petersen did not consciously set out upon an antisemitic smear campaign against Benson. Through the early months of 1937 he repeated his "Mexican Generals" remarks without realizing that he was stirring up an undercurrent of political filth. Disgruntled applicants for jobs in the State administration wrote him applauding his attack and at first hinting at "Jew" control and later openly stating it.[18] Early in 1937 the Superintendent of

[15] "Formal Statement of Hjalmar Petersen Seeking Farmer-Labor Convention Endorsement for Governor, February 19, 1936." Handwritten copy in Petersen Papers, Box 7, printed copy in Williams Papers Box 36. In this statement Petersen stated, "The half dozen 'Mexican Generals' . . . will be put in place." For the convention, see "Proceedings of Farmer-Labor Association Convention, St. Paul, Minnesota, March 27 and 28, 1936," mimeographed copy in Papers of the Farmer-Labor Association, Box 3. See also *Minneapolis Journal,* 29 March 1936, p. 1 and 30 March 1936, p. 12.

[16] For the efforts to keep the knowledge of Olson's terminal illness from him, see Abe I. Harris to Elmer A. Benson, 15 May 1936, Benson Papers Box 3; Petersen knew even before the March Farmer-Labor convention that Olson was incurably ill. See J. A. Vye to Hjalmar Petersen, 15 March 1936 and H. P. to J. A. Vye, 24 March 1936, Petersen Papers Box 8. Petersen's campaign to replace Olson before his death can be traced in H. P. to N. H. Debel, 15 July 1936; H. P. to Senator J. L. McLeod, 31 July 1936; H. P. to Vivian S. Thorp (political writer for the *Minneapolis Journal*) 31 July 1936 and culminated in the infamous letter, H. P. to Governor Floyd B. Olson, 12 August 1936, Petersen Papers Box 9. "Minutes of the State Central Committee, Farmer-Labor Party, August 29, 1936," mimeographed copy in Papers of the Farmer-Labor Association, Box 3.

[17] Naftalin, pp. 325-327; *Minnesota Legislative Manual, 1937,* pp. 206-207 for the official election results.

[18] A. F. Lockhart to Hjalmar Petersen, 16 January 1937; William Friedell to H. P. 16 March 1937;

Schools at Hastings, Minnesota wrote Petersen, ". . . the F-L Party is controlled by a few Jews who are shaking the State down for so much money."[19] Another letter writer wrote, ". . . that Benson with his radical ideas, Jewish advisors and spendthrift tactics have turned Mr. Average voter against him."[20] Petersen did not repudiate these charges but rather consciously began making use of antisemitic innuendo in his public utterances. Increasingly Petersen alleged that Communist infiltrators had captured the Farmer-Labor governor and the party with the help of the "Mexican Generals." Early in 1938 he announced that he would file for Governor in the upcoming race without waiting for endorsement by the Farmer-Labor convention, thus challenging Benson to a primary election contest.[21] When asked to name the "Mexican Generals" at a meeting on 2 February 1938 he answered ". . . Abe Harris, Art Jacobs and Rutchick." Harris and Rutchick we have already met; Jacobs was secretary to the Speaker of the House, Harold E. Barker, and editor of the *State House News,* a weekly sheet of state news sold to rural newspapers. Challenged by Harry S. Goldie, a leading Minneapolis Jewish attorney to repudiate this antisemitism, Petersen, in a letter drafted but never sent, disclaimed antisemitism, stating that "some of my best friends, etc." and reiterating his claims that the State House was controlled by Communist-line "Mexican Generals" and that, though they were mostly Jews, he never once used "Jew" in his campaign speeches or writings.[22] The closest Petersen came to repudiating antisemitism occurred in response to a suggestion made by a Revere, Minnesota chicken hatchery proprietor who wrote in attacking Abe Harris and the *Minnesota Leader,* which he called the "Jewish Leader," "I am planning an attack on the Jews that are in control of the State Administration in the form of a small booklet . . . . Do you think it is wise to attack the Jews openly? I do not believe very much in this whispering attack, it

H. P. to John E. Regan (Democratic candidate for Governor) 15 April 1937; H. P. to Dr. L. L. Sogge, 1 June 1937, Petersen Papers, Box 9. Lockhart, editor of the St. Paul weekly organ of the A. F. of L. Trades and Labor Assembly, *The Minnesota Union Advocate,* wrote in the above cited letter " . . . the editorial is almost as contemptible as Abe Harris's typical semitic spew."

[19] J. P. Karpan to Superintendent Clara Thorpe (Granite Falls, Minnesota), 26 April 1937, enclosed in J. P. Karpan to Hjalmar Petersen, 27 April 1937, Petersen Papers, Box 9.

[20] P. W. Cartwright to Hjalmar Petersen, 14 August 1937, Petersen Papers Box 10.

[21] Petersen, early in January 1938, drafted a long statement announcing his intention to challenge Benson for the Farmer-Labor gubernatorial nomination. That statement was a long attack on Communist control of the Farmer-Labor Party, coupled with an attack alleging excessive C. I. O. influence on Governor Benson. Petersen claimed that Sidney Hillman, through the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Twin City manager, Sander Genis, had contributed large amounts to Benson's election campaign. The local and national figures Petersen attacked by name in the statement were all Jewish, except for Governor Benson. Even Petersen's supporters felt that he had gone too far and urged him to tone down his statement. See "Draft of Statement by Hjalmar Petersen," undated but obviously the one he sent out for review by friends in early January 1938. J. L. McLeod to H. P., 5 January 1938; George Stranvold to H. P., 6 January 1938, Petersen Papers, Box 10.

[22] Harry S. Goldie to Hjalmar Petersen, 10 February 1938; H. P. to Harry S. Goldie, 18 February 1938 (not sent), Petersen Papers, Box 10.

seems to get us nowhere." Petersen responded ". . . an open attack [on the Jews] would boomerang."[23]

Hjalmar Petersen began accumulating a following. Disgruntled job seekers, evangelical antisemites, agrarian radicals with an antisemitic bent began flocking to Petersen's side. Funds to conduct his campaign were contributed by persons close to the United States Steel Corporation and the Northwestern Bank Corporation with the hope that Petersen would eliminate the radical Benson from Minnesota and national political life.[24]

Governor Benson helped gain a constituency for Petersen. A stubborn and inflexible man, he battled with the State legislature over welfare schemes, taxation and employment policies and, when he could not budge the Solons, he invited the "poor and unemployed" organized in the Worker's Alliance to come en masse as a People's Lobby to press their claims with the legislature. This enraged many citizens, law-and-order Farmer-Laborites among them. Benson participated in a New York antifascist demonstration organized by the American League Against War and Fascism, which convinced many Minnesotans that the governor was a radical. He personally went to California to request the governor of that state to free Tom Mooney, a San Francisco labor leader imprisoned since 1916 for allegedly bombing a preparedness day parade, which raised another storm of protest within the state. Finally, in every labor dispute in the organizing years of 1937-38, he sided with the progressive industrial unionists thus simultaneously alienating the unreconstructed open-shop employers of the Citizens Alliance and the American Federation of Labor state establishment. Benson's actions were acclaimed by the *Daily Worker* and the *Northwest Communist* in articles which were immediately reprinted in the local Twin Cities papers, and the Trotskyist-controlled Teamsters' Joint Council joined with the American Federation of Labor conservatives in repudiating Benson and secretly supporting Petersen.[25]

[23] E. T. Ebbesen to Hjalmar Petersen, 24 December 1937; H. P. to E. T. Ebbesen, 27 December 1937, Petersen Papers, Box 10.

[24] One of Petersen's supporters wrote that not only are the officers of the Northwestern National Bank and First National Bank Corporations supporting him, but that the leading fundmentalist evangelist antisemite in Minneapolis, Luke Rader is enthusiastic and will support Petersen in the primary campaign. William Howard Anderson to H. P., 26 March 1938, Petersen Papers, Box 10. True to his word, Luke Rader published a pamphlet, *The Sinister Menace of Communism to Christianity,* in which he called upon all Christians to support Petersen and defeat Benson and his Jewish Communist supporters. See Luke Rader, *Sinister Menace* in Oscar F. Hawkins Papers, Box 5. Petersen's financial support from the leading Minnesota industrialists and bankers was revealed when, after the primary election, there was a falling out among his campaign staff over finances. See J. L. McLeod to H. P., 3 October 1938; John G. Priebe to J. L. McLeod, 28 September 1938; Philip L. Scherer to J. L. McLeod, 30 September 1938; J. L. McLeod to H. P., 7 October 1938; H. P. to J. L. McLeod, 11 October 1938, Petersen Papers, Box 11.

[25] Shields, pp. 97-158; Elmer Davis, "Minnesota Worry-Go-Round," *Collier's Weekly,* 26 June 1937, pp. 14-15, 41-42; Harry Levin, "Divided Front in Minnesota," *The Nation,* 2 October 1937, pp. 346-348; Elmer Benson, "Labor is Coming Into Its Own," *Labor Defender,* October 1937, p. 10; A. I. Harris, "Benson: Labor Governor," *New Republic,* 3 November 1937, pp. 360-362; Meridel LeSueur,

But it was the antisemitic character of the primary election campaign, aimed at Benson through his secretary Rutchick and the *Leader* editor Abe Harris, which greatly concerned the Farmer-Labor Association. Harris had very early broken relations with Petersen. In December 1936, while Petersen was still governor, Harris discerned the antisemitic nature of the accidental governor's attack upon him and wrote him: "If I were in your place, I would submit at once to a lunacy examination by a commission of alienists. . . . Why do you not bring your anti-Olson campaign into the open. You do not dare to, because at heart you are a dirty, filthy coward. If you think that I am going to take this stuff lying down, you are under the wrong impression. You may be governor to some people, but you are ten degrees lower than a rodent to me."[26] In April 1938, during the height of the primary campaign, Harris offered his resignation as editor of the *Leader* because he had become the target of the antisemitic campaign and he did not want to jeopardize the reelection chances of the State Administration. In rejecting his resignation, Harold L. Peterson, writing for the State Committee asserted: "We are aware of the widespread vicious antisemitic campaign now being carried on in this State . . . . If we were to bow before this antisemitic movement, we would be guilty, in a crucial moment of our State's and nation's history, of having betrayed the cause of human civilization, and we would be helping to prepare the way for fascism . . . ."[27]

An attempt was made, both before and after the June primary, to replace Roger Rutchick as the Governor's secretary. Rutchick also offered to resign and Senators Lundeen and Shipstead lined up an appointment for the St. Paul attorney in the United States Attorney General's office, but Benson and the State Committee of the Party refused to take "the easy way out."[28] Before the decision to retain Rutchick was made, Harold C. Hagen, secretary to Congressman R. T. Buckler and later a congressman in his own right, informed Governor Benson: "If you and the F-L leaders should fall for this Jew-baiting scare, the newspapers in opposition to . . . our administration would make great capital of any so-called purge . . . . Mr. Rutchick is a high class gentleman . . . and I would very much dislike to see any change made in

"Benson of Minnesota," *New Masses,* 6 September 1938, pp. 8-9; *Daily Worker,* 7 August 1937, and 8 August 1937; *Northwest Communist,* March 1938; "Governor Benson's Speech On War and Fascism Delivered August 7, 1937, New York City," Benson Papers, Box 3. For the Trotskyist analysis of the primary campaign, see "A Socialist Analysis of the Election in Minnesota," undated, issued by Local Twin Cities, Oscar F. Hawkins Papers, Box 5.

[26] A. I. Harris to Hjalmar Petersen, 21 December 1936. Harris wrote Petersen during the primary campaign protesting his continuous use of "Abie" in attacking him as another example of antisemitic hints being used for political effect. A. I. Harris to Hjalmar Petersen, 18 March 1937, Petersen Papers, Box 9.

[27] A. I. Harris to State Committee of the Farmer-Labor Association, 23 April 1938; Harold L. Peterson to A. I. Harris, 25 April 1938, Papers of the Farmer-Labor Association, Box 4.

[28] Shields, *Mr. Progressive*, pp. 187-189; Elmer A. Benson to James J. Farley, 15 April 1938; Henry Paull to Elmer A. Benson, 5 May 1938; Harold L. Peterson to Elmer A. Benson, 20 May 1938, Benson Papers, Boxes 7 and 8.

the personnel of your office because of the . . . Jew-baiting campaign now being carried on . . . . We dug our trenches and fought our battle on the Red issue and are winning out on that. We should do the same on the Jew-baiting issue . . . ."[29] Governor Benson's attitude towards the Minnesota campaign can best be summarized by quoting from a letter he wrote Rabbi Stephen S. Wise during the height of the primary election campaign when asked to endorse the calling of an extraordinary session of the American Jewish Congress: "Recent events have shown conclusively that antisemitic campaigns originate in the same camp whence came the campaigns for vigilantism and fascism. The persons constituting the fascist camp seek to make minority racial, religious, and political groups into objects of popular hate in order to give the people scapegoats for the present economic maladjustments . . . ."[30]

Despite massive Republican cross-over votes in the Farmer-Labor primary, Benson squeaked through to victory with a 16,000 vote margin over Petersen out of a half million votes cast. The preliminary round was over; the main event against the Republican challenger, Harold E. Stassen of South St. Paul was on.[31]

The Republicans picked up the antisemitic campaign where the Farmer-Labor opposition left off. What had been largely a whispering campaign and one by innuendo became open, brazen, well-financed and successful.

The chief architect of the Republican antisemitic campaign was Ray P. Chase of Anoka, Minnesota. After graduation from the University of Minnesota and its law school in 1905, Chase and his brother Roe published and edited a local newspaper, the *Anoka Herald.* In 1916 he joined the staff of the State Auditor, becoming State Auditor himself in 1920. Chase was twice elected to this post, resigning in 1930 to run as Republican candidate for governor against Olson. In 1932 he was elected to the United States Congress and after two years of voting against every New Deal measure was defeated in his bid for reelection in 1934. For the rest of his life, till 1948, Chase devoted himself to unsuccessful attempts at gaining political office, but primarily at "research" into corruption, mismanagement and Communist activities in state government. Ray Chase was no lunatic-fringe antisemite, but was in the mainstream of Old Guard Minnesota Republicanism to whom even Herbert Hoover was too far to the left.[32]

[29] Harold C. Hagen to Elmer A. Benson, 8 July 1938. In a letter sent a few days later, Hagen explained that the Petersen forces believed that Benson was exaggerating the Jewish issue and that all they wanted in return for their support against the Republican challenger was the removal of Communist influence from the State administration, not the removal of Roger Rutchick. Harold C. Hagen to Elmer A. Benson, 13 July 1938, Benson Papers, Box 10.

[30] Stephen S. Wise to Elmer A. Benson, 12 April 1938; Elmer A. Benson to Stephen S. Wise, 5 May 1938, Benson Papers, Boxes 7 and 8. For an earlier Benson statement attacking antisemitism nationally, internationally and locally, see Elmer A. Benson to Mark Dorio, 2 September 1937, Benson Papers, Box 4.

[31] Official primary election returns are given in *Minnesota Legislative Manual, 1939,* pp. 208-209.

[32] "Biographical Sketch of Ray Park Chase (1880-1948)," Inventory of Ray P. Chase Papers. The Chase papers, consisting of 44 boxes of letters and reports, are a complete record of Chase's activities.

During his 1930 gubernatorial campaign, Chase hired the unsavory, discredited editor of the gagged political-pornographic weekly, the *Saturday Press,* J. M. Near, to look into the connection between Floyd B. Olson and Yiddish gangsters. The correspondence that followed between them from 1930 to 1935 moved imperceptibly from obsession with the theme of Jew-gangsters to that of Jew-Communists.[33] Chase did, however, attempt to weave the two themes together creatively when he pencil-scribbled a proposed conspiracy between the underworld Jewish liquor interest of respectable Minneapolis Jewish furniture merchants, Elmer Benson, and Clarence Hathaway, the editor of the *Daily Worker* whom Chase accused in this pencilled scenario of being a hidden Jew.[34] During the 1934-35 strike wave in Minnesota, Chase received many letters and handbills warning that the agitation was " . . . led by Jew Pig Communists. Hitler has shown us the only practical way to crush the labor movement, strikes and Jew Communism. Forward under the radiant cross of Jesus against Jews, Niggers and Communists." To which Chase noted "Amen."[35]

After the 1936 landslide victory of the Democrats and the Farmer-Laborites, which Chase attributed to the strength of Farleyism and the Hebrews, the Ray P. Chase Research Bureau was launched with offices in the Twin Cities, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Funds were contributed to this effort by a list of individuals who represented the élite of Minnesota business. George L. Gillette, President of Minneapolis-Moline Company, acted as fund raiser and received contributions from Jay C. Hormel, James Ford Bell, George K. Belden, Colonel Robert McCormick and officers of the leading bank holding corporations in Minnesota. Among the stated purposes of the

For Chase's economic, social and political attitudes see Chase campaign speeches and letters, 1932 and 1934, Box 5 and Herbert S. Woodward to Ray P. Chase, 20 April 1932 (Box 38); Ray P. Chase to W. M. Parker, 21 November 1932 (Box 4); Richard G. Olson to Ray P. Chase, 3 April 1934; Ray P. Chase to Richard G. Olson, 9 April 1934 (Box 16). A short biography, detailing Chase's political and economic views went out to potential funding sources when the Research Bureau was deeply involved in the 1938 campaign. See George G. Gillette to Ernest A. Jackson, 28 July 1938, Box 42, Chase Papers.

[33] J. M. Near to Roe G. Chase (brother of Ray P.), 3 December 1930, 12 December 1930, 15 December 1930, 19 December 1930, 27 December 1930, 1 January 1931, 10 January 1931; J. M. Near to Ray P. Chase, 16 January 1931, 21 January 1931, 15 March 1932, Box 38, Chase Papers. The correspondence continued until 1935. Near was involved in a significant United States Supreme Court freedom of the press decision handed down in 1931, Near vs. Minnesota. See John E. Hartmann, "The Minnesota Gag Law and the Fourteenth Amendment," *Minnesota History,* 37 (1960), 161-173. In light of Mr. Chase's private use of antisemitic materials during his campaign for Governor in 1930, it is interesting to note the existence of a two-page Yiddish handbill calling for Jewish voters to cast their ballots for Chase and not Floyd B. Olson. See "Shtimt far Chase far Governor—Er Is A Yiddisher Friend," Box 38, Chase Papers.

[34] Pencilled and typewritten notes in Jacobson Furniture Exchange File, 1931-1937, Box 16; pencilled notes, Elmer Benson File, Box 4. While Chase was conjuring up this "plot" outline he inquired whether Clarence Hathaway, a former Twin Cities native, was Jewish. See Ray P. Chase to Oscar H. Smith, 16 July 1938; Ray P. Chase to William D. Pelley, 16 July 1938, Box 42, Chase Papers.

[35] Anonymous to Ray P. Chase, 22 August 1935, typed on handbill by Robert Edward Edmondson, "To Judas Iscariot," Box 40. For other examples of antisemitic materials collected by Chase and his reactions to them, see "Jews" folder in Box 16, Chase Papers.

Bureau were "... to block the efforts of the present Governor and his communistic Jewish advisors to perpetuate themselves in power ... [and] to block efforts ... to initiate and promote in Minnesota the Soviet plan of Social Ownership of Key Industries." The method to accomplish this was to collect "... documentary evidence to prove the existence of the menace and the nature of radical attacks." Finally to make all of this known to the public through a massive media campaign.[36]

Chase quickly and quietly gathered his data. He began and continued a long time correspondence with William Dudley Pelley of the Silver Shirts, Harry A. Jung of the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, and Gerald L. K. Smith, asking and receiving information regarding organizations and individuals.[37] He had an agent in the State House raid the files of the State Relief Administration office and received voluminous reports on "Jew Reds" on the University of Minnesota campus from Dean of Student Affairs, Edward E. Nicholson. Dean Nicholson was particularly incensed that Governor Benson had appointed George B. Leonard to be the first Jewish regent at the University of Minnesota.[38]

[36] J. E. Meyers (former Minneapolis mayor) to Ray P. Chase, 16 November 1936; Ray P. Chase to J. E. Meyers, 19 November 1936; H. G. Gearhart to Ray P. Chase, 18 November 1936 (Box 40); "Statement of Purpose, and Proposed Budget, Committee for Education," 25 September 1937; Ray P. Chase to Jay C. Hormel, 4 December 1936; Ray P. Chase to James Ford Bell, 9 December 1936 (Box 41); Ray P. Chase to George L. Gillette, 31 January 1938; "Committee of Contributors for Ray P. Chase Research Bureau," 15 February 1938; George L. Gillette to G. Nelson Dayton, 14 December 1938 (Box 42). For correspondence requesting contributions from the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Chambers of Commerce, see H. V. Fetzer (Chase's secretary) to Ford Hicks, 8 November 1937; O. H. Smith to Paul McComas, 30 December 1937 Box 41, Chase Papers.

[37] Ray P. Chase to William D. Pelley, 15 June 1938; William D. Pelley to Ray P. Chase, 20 June 1938; Ray P. Chase to William D. Pelley, 16 July 1938; Alfred H. E. Talpeg (for Pelley) to Ray P. Chase, 25 July 1938 (Box 42). The correspondence with Harry A. Jung was of long duration, beginning in 1935 and ending in 1943. Jung and Chase exchanged materials on Jews, Communists, radicals and internationalists. Elizabeth Dilling also contributed to these exchanges. For a sampling of the letters, primarily those dealing with Minnesota and the Benson administration, see Harry A. Jung to Ray P. Chase, 23 October 1936 (Box 18); Ray P. Chase to Harry A. Jung, 4 March 1938; Harry A. Jung to Ray P. Chase, 7 March 1938 (Box 42). See also correspondence between Chase and Jung which was conducted on a first-name basis by 1941, in Boxes 43 and 44, Chase Papers. Chase and Gerald L. K. Smith began a correspondence in 1938 which continued until 1943. In a list of prominent friends of Ray Chase, compiled on 15 November 1939 for fund raising purposes, Gerald L. K. Smith is conspicuously listed, Box 43, Chase Papers.

[38] For the files stolen from the State Capitol, see Boxes 16 and 20, Chase Papers. Ray P. Chase had an active and enthusiastic supporter on the University of Minnesota campus in Dean Edward E. Nicholson. Beginning in 1934 and continuing through 1942, Dean Nicholson provided Chase with reports on radicals on the campus. These reports consisted of transcripts of student and faculty meetings, dossiers on individual students and faculty members and spy reports from agents infiltrating campus groups. Dean Nicholson was obsessed by "Jewish radicalism" and his reports reflect this obsession so that he designated as "Jew agitators" such moderate liberals as Richard Scammon, Eric Sevareid, Benjamin Lippincott, Harold C. Deutsch, Ernest Osgood and Joseph Warren Beach, the last four distinguished members of the faculty. Chase and Nicholson shared these reports with the F.B.I., Military Intelligence, Pelley, Jung and Gerald L. K. Smith. See Edward E. Nicholson to Ray P. Chase, 4 January 1937; Ray P. Chase to Edward E. Nicholson, 13 January 1937 (Box 41). Edward E. Nicholson to Ray P. Chase, 15 March 1941 and 7 April 1941, contain lists of student and faculty radicals. Spy reports and confidential minutes of Social Problems Club, Jacobin Club and other Chase-Nicholson correspondence can be found in Boxes 38 to 44 and the "Practical Pacifist" folder, Box 20, Chase Papers.

The primary election was a disappointment to Chase. Not only did Benson win the Farmer-Labor gubernatorial nomination, but his Old Guard Republican friend, Martin Nelson, was defeated by the young Harold E. Stassen. Despite Stassen's victory, Chase was determined to go ahead to defeat Benson using the weapons left over by the Petersen effort but honed sharper through the efforts of the Chase Research Bureau.

During the quiet months of the summer, before the main event of the 1938 campaign got under way, Chase was particularly diligent in searching out material regarding Harris, Rutchick, Jacobs, and a young Benson speech writer, Sherman Dryer. Dryer's name came to Chase's attention when Dean Nicholson informed him that Dryer a " . . . Jew, Communist, Agitator and publicist . . . " who, Nicholson alleged, had succeeded Richard Scammon and Eric Sevareid as the leading campus Red was now a speech writer for Elmer Benson and that Dryer looked like " . . . a typical Jew."[39]

The quiet of the summer was broken when the Twin Cities press revealed that Roy Zachary, Pelley's chief lieutenant in the Silver Shirts, was holding secret meetings in the Twin Cities and that among those attending these meetings was George K. Belden, President of the Citizens Alliance and a leading Republican in Minneapolis. Rabbi Albert I. Gordon immediately wrote to Belden demanding an explanation for his actions, and Belden responded that he attended the meeting only out of curiosity and a desire to combat labor racketeering. Mr. Belden denied any knowledge of the anti-semitic character of the Silver Shirts, even though two years previously when the Silver Shirts first attempted to organize in Minnesota, their motives and ideas were widely exposed in a series of scathing articles in the *Minneapolis Journal,* by a young cub reporter fresh out of the University of Minnesota, Arnold E. Sevareid.[40]

There were two Republican campaigns in 1938. Harold Stassen spoke about issues; tried to out New Deal the New Deal, damned the special interests in language reminiscent of Floyd B. Olson, and his followers described him as "truly Olson's heir . . . . " Stassen claimed that he would continue the

[39] Ray P. Chase to Charles W. Henke, 6 April 1938; Charles W. Henke to Ray P. Chase, 11 April 1938; Ray P. Chase to Oscar H. Smith, 14 July 1938 and 16 July 1938; Ray P. Chase to F. S. Steiner, 15 July 1938; Ray P. Chase to William D. Pelley, 16 July 1938; Ray P. Chase to Charles R. Adams, 18 July 1938 (Box 42); Edward E. Nicholson, "Confidential Notes on Radicalism at the University of Minnesota, 1938" (Box 38) and "Arthur N. Jacobs" file, Box 16, Chase Papers.

[40] *Minneapolis Tribune,* 3 August 1938, p. 8; 5 August 1938, p. 5; *Minnesota Leader,* 6 August 1938, p. 1; Albert I. Gordon to George K. Belden, 4 August 1938; George K. Belden to Albert I. Gordon, 4 August 1938, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota Papers, Box 40. Arnold Eric Sevareid, *A Reporter Tells the Truth About the Silver Shirts* (Minneapolis, 1938). This was a collection of Sevareid's 1936 *Minneapolis Journal* articles (Minnesota Historical Society Pamphlet Collection). The Silver Shirt Minnesota contact list for 1938—stolen from the Pelley files in Asheville, North Carolina—reveals that in addition to Chase and Belden, Stafford King, State Auditor and Mike Holm, Secretary of State, both conservative Republicans, as well as over a score of other prominent Minnesota Republican industrialists and bankers had dealings with Pelley and the Silver Shirts. See "Minnesota Contacts Taken from Pelley's Files, 1938," Box 40, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota Papers.

Farmer-Labor social programs but run them more efficiently and fairly. He further promised to institute a program of civil service reform, labor reform and social insurance which would combine the best of the New Deal with the best elements of business efficiency. While Stassen took the high road, Chase and his friends plumbed the sewers.[41]

A whispering campaign was begun which sought to explain Jewish control over Benson by tracing it to his marriage bed. It was falsely rumored that Frances Miller Benson was Jewish. Benson's Communist support was emphasized as was his erratic behavior on the stump. The major campaign contribution of the Chase group, however, was a slick antisemitic pamphlet distributed en masse in early October entitled *Are They Communists or Catspaws.*[42] This sixty page pamphlet with countless photographs stressed the Jewishness of Benson's major aides. Photos of Harris, Rutchick, Jacobs and Dryer emphasized the stereotypical nazi view of the Jew. Their alleged Communist activities were outlined, most of the information coming from fascist groups and most of it blatantly false. Benson's speech on behalf of the American League Against War and Fascism was featured, illustrated with doctored photographs depicting Benson in close proximity to a semitic featured member wearing a Young Communist League cap. The booklet, subtitled "A Red Baiting Article" by Ray P. Chase, concluded with an attack on Benson's appointments to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents and their willingness to allow such Communists as the Black poet Langston Hughes to declaim his anti-Christian poetry at the University. The booklet quoted Hughe's poem "Goodbye Christ" as an example of what, it hinted, would happen to Christian values if Benson and his Communist Catspaw advisers were retained in office.[43]

Before the impact of this pamphlet could be fully gauged, a scurrilous cartoon was distributed throughout the State, blown up into posters and finally placed on giant billboards. This cartoon entitled "Three Jehu Drivers" shows a donkey with Governor Benson's face, being ridden by three semitic featured riders, Rutchick, Harris and Jacobs in the direction of rule or ruin. Around them are the forgotten men, the Yankee, Irish, Italian, Scandinavian,

[41] Stassen's campaign was prominently reported in the Twin Cities press. See Harold E. Stassen's Speech Files, 1938, Box 5, Chase Papers.

[42] Shields, p. 199; Eva Lindbergh Christie to Hjalmar Petersen, 15 October 1938, Box 11, Peterson Papers. For the raw materials of the attacks on Benson as a Communist tool, see "Elmer A. Benson File" Box 4, Chase Papers.

[43] Ray P. Chase, *Are They Communists Or Catspaws* (Anoka, Minn., 1938). There are copies of this booklet in the Chase papers, Benson papers, and in the pamphlet collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. The raw materials for the pamphlet can be seen in "Communist-Catspaws File," Box 8 Chase Papers. Efforts at exposing the forged photographs were attempted by the Benson forces but their efforts were too late and not convincing. See "Forgery! Frame-Up!" a four-page leaflet issued by the Benson for Governor Committee, 29 October 1938, and Byrl A. Whitney to Elmer A. Benson, 25 November 1938, including Whitney's statement, "A Red Herring," Box 14, Benson Papers. (Whitney was a participant, together with Benson, at the 7 August 1937 New York Meeting).

German, French, Polish and others holding up their hands and in one version declaiming, "When Do We Get On, Governor?"[44]

Finally, Ray Chase through his friend Colonel McCormick, publisher and editor of the *Chicago Tribune,* and using Mark Gehan, former St. Paul mayor as an intermediary, was able to convince Congressman Martin Dies to hold hearings in Washington, D.C. late in October on Communist influence in the Farmer-Labor Party. A parade of witnesses repeated the charges made by Hjalmar Petersen in the primary campaign and elaborated upon by Ray Chase during the election campaign and even though old-time Farmer-Laborite Tom Davis appeared as a rebuttal witness, it was too late in the campaign to prevent the cumulative effect of the hearings from reinforcing the antisemitic low road efforts of Chase and his friends.[45]

Protests came into Stassen headquarters condemning the antisemitic nature of the campaign. Leading Minnesotans begged that he repudiate Chase's actions. Stassen remained silent. During the week prior to the elections a delegation of leading Jewish Republicans met with Stassen asking him to do something. His response was to place an advertisement in the local Anglo-Jewish weekly the day before election to preach a sermon on tolerance, not once mentioning the reason for this kind of election eve piety.[46]

Election day was anticlimatic. Stassen overwhelmingly defeated Benson, and Republicans captured every major state office. All Farmer-Labor congressmen but one were defeated in reelection bids, and the State Legislature went overwhelmingly Republican. So ended the most successful use of political antisemitism in the United States. Benson might have lost the election without the use of antisemitism as a weapon as an anti-New Deal wave swept the nation, but antisemitism was used and used successfully. The Farmer-Labor Party was routed. Election night the business élite celebrated in the Minneapolis Athletic Club, toasting Ray Chase and wishing wistfully that 1938 signalled the end of the New Deal and a return to the old American virtues of thrift, diligence and entrepreneurial liberty. It was not to be.[47]

[44] Cartoon "Three Jehu Drivers," 1938 Box 41, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota Papers. See also Herbert S. Rutman, "Defense and Development: A History of Minneapolis Jewry, 1930-1950," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1970, (unpublished), pp. 124-127; Shields, p. 199.

[45] Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Seventy-Fifth Congress, Third Session, House of Representatives, *Hearings* (Washington, D.C., 1939), pp. 1359-1422; Paul Y. Anderson, "Dies Plot Exposed," *Special Bulletin* (St. Paul), 5 November 1938, in Oscar F. Hawkins Papers, Box 5.

[46] Jewish Republican protests were muted. Letters were sent to Chase and a delegation to Stassen. Chase disclaimed any antisemitic intent and publicly announced that leading Republican Jews supported his activities. This put Josiah E. Brill, the most prominent Jewish Republican, in a difficult position within the Jewish community. Although he protested to Chase, he never publicly repudiated Chase or his allegations. See Ray P. Chase to J. E. Brill, 26 January 1939 (marked Confidential) Box 43, Chase Papers. For Stassen's pious disclaimer, see *American Jewish World,* 4 November 1938, p. 3.

[47] Ray P. Chase to Oscar H. Smith, 9 November 1938, Box 42, Chase Papers. Many of Benson's correspondents clearly saw the role of antisemitism in his defeat. See Henry Sloane Blacker to Elmer A. Benson, 17 November 1938; Lillian Gillilland to Elmer A. Benson, 11 November 1938; Irene Paull to Elmer A. Benson, 13 November 1938 Box 14, Benson Papers. A perceptive analysis of Benson's

In the historiographical debate that raged in the scholarly journals over a decade ago regarding the role of antisemitism in populist thought and politics, the key individual under consideration was Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota. In light of that debate and fact, one question which emerges from the above description of the successful use of political antisemitism in the Minnesota election of 1938 revolves around the validity of the charges regarding populist antisemitism and its continuity into the politics of the Great Depression.

Although Hjalmar Petersen's and Ray Chase's correspondents included many rural protesting types whose social and personal characteristics parallel the populist protesters of the late 19th Century, the major sources of political antisemitism during the Great Depression were quite different. Those who argue that populist antisemitism was a significant factor in that movement, point to the anti-Jewish rhetoric of some major populist leaders. This rhetoric was directed at identifying the "gold bug" sentiment with the large foreign banking interests symbolized by the Rothschilds. A subordinate theme of populist rhetoric was the attack upon "non-producer" middlemen elements in rural America, symbolized not only by the railroads, banks, and grain elevator companies, but also by the isolated Jewish merchants and peddlers in rural Middle America. Whether these rhetorical themes constituted a major antisemitic element in the so called "status anxiety" politics of developing industrial capitalism deserves an essay in itself, and an examination of the Ignatius Donnelly papers reveals an ambivalence leading to a verdict of "not proven." This, however, is not the issue here. The issue is whether there is a continuous strain of so-called populist antisemitism surfacing dramatically in the Minnesota political arena during the Great Depression.[48]

The antisemitic rhetoric of the 1930s was dramatically different from the rhetoric of the 1890s. The Jewish "traits" under attack during the Great Depression were gangsterism, radicalism and control of State government. The symbol of Jewish perfidy in the 1930s was the radical or revolutionary who penetrated State government, controlled the Farmer-Labor administration and was prepared to transform American society. It was not the local Rothschilds, but the local Karl Marxes who were conjured up as the source

defeat can be found in Vince A. Day to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 18 January 1939 Box 1, Day Papers. The *Minneapolis Labor Review,* 18 November 1938, p. 4, juxtaposed Benson's defeat at the hands of Minnesota antisemites with the *Kristallnacht* events in nazi Germany, condemning them both in the same editorial column.

[48] For the scholarly discussion of populist antisemitism see Oscar Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 40 (1951), 323-344; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), pp. 76-81; John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* 43 (1957), 559-578; C. Vann Woodward, "Populist Heritage and the Intellectual" *American Scholar* 29 (1959-60), 55-72; Norman Pollack, "The Myth of Populist Antisemitism," *American Historical Review* 68 (1962-63), 76-80; Christopher Lasch to Editor, *American Historical Review* 68 (1962-63), 910-911. For a summary of the debate on populist antisemitism see the articles by Norman Pollack, Oscar Handlin, Irwin Unger and J. Rogers Hollingsworth in *Agricultural History* 39 (1965), 59-85.

of evil in Minnesota to be exorcised by Benson's defeat. Populist antisemitic rhetoric was anticapitalist; the antisemitic rhetoric of the 1930s was anti-communist.

The purposes of antisemitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression were as different from the purposes of populist antisemitism as the rhetoric. The populists had used antisemitism, when and if they did, as a weapon to combat monopoly capitalism and return to the supposedly free market conditions, especially in agriculture which they believed had existed in the golden age of individualized enterprise. Political antisemitism was used in Minnesota in the 1930s as a weapon to defeat increased governmental interference in the economy on behalf of unionizing workers, producer-cooperative farmers and the unemployed. The major financial support for both Petersen's and Chase's anti-Benson campaigns came from the previously dominant social and economic élite of Minnesota. The Olson-Benson Farmer-Labor Administration was viewed by them as a threat to their economic and political dominance. They were willing to use any weapon, including antisemitism, in order to recapture the instruments of state power. Although they partially succeeded in accomplishing this in Minnesota in 1938 they were unable to translate this and other local victories, as in Michigan, into a complete national reversal of programs and policies.

At about the same time that the scholarly world was debating the existence and extent of populist antisemitism, the focus of the study of antisemitism shifted from socioeconomic analysis to sociopsychological analysis. Thus studies of the personal pathologies leading to antisemitic thought and action dominated the scholarly literature of the last few decades. Overemphasis on "authoritarian" personality types, F-scales and personality disorders excessively diverted scholarly attention from examination of the socioeconomic base for the attempted use of political antisemitism. Sociopsychological studies have their value in helping to explain and predict individual and group behavior; the historical use to which this behavior is put requires political and socioeconomic study. It is hoped that the description and analysis of the successful use of political antisemitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression will reopen this direction of scholarly inquiry.